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ABSTRACT

Public schools must conform to the changed mood of public opinion, which in the 1980s favors traditional education both academically and in morality and standards of behavior. The educational trends of the 1960s and 1970s were associated with sustained attempts to use the public schools as instruments of social engineering, that is, instruments to reform society by reshaping the attitudes of children. The traditional socializing function of formal education changed from a relatively conservative direction to a radical direction. Racial integration was imposed by federal courts; textbooks were rewritten to appease militant pressure groups; and values clarification was used to undermine traditional moral standards. Kohlberg's program of moral education also encouraged the destruction of traditional moral assumptions. Out of all this emerged the "Me Generation." Recent trends have provoked popular resistance against the objectives of the social engineers. One sign of that resistance is the rejection of values clarification and demands for traditional moral education. The revulsion against ethical relativism and social engineering in the schools is also a movement toward school decentralization, that is, toward more intimate relations between communities and families on the one hand and the schools and teachers on the other. The question now is "will the educational establishment go along?" If educators resist, they risk bringing on an extreme reaction. (Author/RM)

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Abstract

SOCIAL STUDIES VERSUS SOCIAL ENGINEERING: VALUES EDUCATION RECONSIDERED.

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Public opinion which was radically inclined (or possibly apathetic and demoralized) in the years from 1965 to 1980, appears to have entered a phase of reaction against the prevalent moral laxity and permissiveness of that period. In particular, there is a demand for more rigid standards of morality and of academic achievement in the schools. Will the educational establishment, which is at present to the left of dominant popular opinion, respond to the new demand? Or will there be a more extreme reaction on the part of the public?

The educational trends of the '60s-'70s were associated with sustained attempts to use the public schools as instruments of social engineering, that is, instruments to reform society by reshaping the attitudes of children. The traditional socializing function of formal education was switched from a relatively conservative direction to radical objectives. Racial integration was imposed by federal courts; textbooks were rewritten to appease militant pressure groups, and "values clarification" was used to

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undermine traditional moral standards (or irrational prejudices). Kohlberg's program of moral education also encouraged the destruction of traditional moral assumptions. Out of all this emerged, perhaps unintendedly, the "Me Generation".

The objectives of the social engineers could at best (or worst) be imperfectly achieved, since the influence of day schools on character formation is limited. Had they been fully achievable the results would have been an atomized, privatized, equalized society that would be an easy target for bureaucratic-managerial totalitarianism. In fact, however, recent trends have provoked popular resistance.

One sign of that resistance is the rejection of "values clarification" and demands for (traditional) moral education. The latter is concerned not with logic-chopping and ethical dilemmas but with consensual community standards and strengthening of intuitive, internalized moral reactions. Will the educational establishment go along? Or will it stick with the social engineering band wagon (as the NEA leadership seems determined to do)?

After a brief outline of the essential elements of moral education, the question is raised as to whether the idea of communities with common standards is still viable in the United States. This is a deeply disturbing problem. If community has been destroyed, then democracy cannot survive, and education will cease to be in spontaneous harmony with the public it serves. Personally I think the demise of the community has been exaggerated, but I am prepared to see smaller, more intimate communities form and cluster around a congenial school, probably supported by a system of vouchers and tuition tax credits. These are speculative matters, but inescapable when one examines the implications of the present revolt against social engineering and values clarification.

Social Studies versus Social Engineering: Values Education Reconsidered

Raymond English
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Everything that needs to be said has already been said.
But since no one was listening, everything must be said again.

André Gide, quoted by Ira Glasser, in Doing Good: The Limits of Benevolence, by William Gaylin, Ira Glasser, Steven Marcus, David Rothman. New York: Pantheon, 1978, p. 168.

The theme of this paper is that the public schools must conform to the changed mood of public opinion, which in the 1980s favors traditional education both academically and in morality and standards of behavior. Yet at the outset I face a paradox: the educational profession, according to a recent poll, is far to the left of the general public on moral principles. To the question, "Is abortion morally wrong?" 65 per cent of the general public said "yes" as against 26 per cent of the leaders of the education profession. Some other typical issues were "Is pre-marital sex morally wrong?"

General Public: 40 per cent "yes"
Education: 27 per cent "yes"

(This question could have drawn a clearer distinction between promiscuous sexual activity and sexual relation with one's intended spouse.)

"Is homosexuality morally wrong?"

General Public: 71 per cent "yes"
Education: 30 per cent "yes"

"Is sex before sixteen morally wrong?"

General Public: 71 per cent "yes"
Education: 46 per cent "yes"

These results are from a poll published by Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Co. of Hartford. These particular figures were reprinted in The Wall Street Journal, May 15, 1981.

The disparity between the moral perceptions of the majority of the general public and those of the majority of educational leaders is striking. It is paralleled by the disparities between "news media" leaders and "law and justice" leaders on the one hand and the general public on the other. The "knowledge industries", which support the "new class", are, according to neo-conservatives such as Irving Kristol, Peter Berger, and Michael Novak, the

nurseries of radical chic.

Given these statistics, it may be hopeless so expect the school to conform to the new tide in public opinion. However, it is more than probable that the typical "educational leader" does not represent the views of the rank-and-file of teachers in public schools. For what it is worth, the leaders of the National Education Association admitted, in the wake of the presidential election of 1980, that although the organization threw itself and its funds unreservedly behind Jimmy Carter, more than 40 per cent of the membership voted for Reagan. The average classroom teacher does not aspire to intellectual avant gardisme.

With this caveat and qualification of it, the argument can proceed.

The Extreme Phase of Social Engineering

About 20 years ago a superintendent of schools asserted in conversation that the business of the public schools was "to make a better society". Although I assumed that this was the usual self-inflation of the educational profession, I argued that such an apparently laudable goal was in fact both arrogant and unrealizable. It was arrogant because educators have no special insight into what type of society is "better" than the one we have or into the most efficient methods for achieving it. It was unrealizable because many social forces exert greater influence on character and morals than does formal education.

I little knew that the superintendent's view was about to become the hidden curriculum of a considerable portion of the educational establishment, and that social engineering through the public schools was to be the unarticulated agenda of a hundred militant pressure groups, some ideological, some ethnic, some economic, some religious, and some driven largely by the political ambitions of their leaders or the financial interests of their legal advisers. It is no doubt true that public education always has a socializing function as well as the functions of transmitting knowledge and developing skills, but socialization by schools in democratically governed communities generally reinforces rather than undermines the prevailing social mores. It is also true that in the United States pressure groups have for generations brought their influence to bear on public education.

In recent years, however, a far more activist role has been claimed for the public schools. They were, according to the half-explicit agenda of many militants both in and out of the educational profession, to remake society by remolding the values and behavior of the rising generation. Frances FitzGerald,

in a book welcomed by the intelligent general public but resented by professors of pedagogy, summed up the relatively new phenomenon:

> The propensity of educationists and school reformers to want to mold the character, rather than the minds, of children, however, derives from another syndrome. The assumption of pedagogy is, after all, that children are different from adults. From this assumption it is possible to proceed to the conclusion that children (even high-school students) are very different from adults -- weird, deformed creatures who require salvation rather than simply schooling in history or English. While the Puritans believed that children were naturally sinful and had to be educated to virtue, modern pedagogues tend to believe that children are mentally ill. (The latest word on this subject comes from Paul Brandwein. "Above all,"he has written, "a teacher heals." And, "In the social sciences, if nowhere else, a consideration of the child's development and mental health, within the purview of the meanings of civilization, is paramount.") Similarly, the study of teaching methods carries with it the assumption that children can and should be manipulated in certain ways. On this line of reasoning, it is possible to proceed to the proposition that the aim of teaching is to obtain as much control over children as possible. It is not necessary to proceed in this direction -- anymore than it is necessary to believe that children are mentally ill -- but in practice many professional educationists and their critics have done so in varying degrees. Pedagogy, in sum, is not just a vague and confusing subject, it is dangerous to those who think about it for too long.
>
> (Frances FitzGerald, America Revised:History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century. New York: Vintage Books, 1980, pp. 214-215)

Although Ms. FitzGerald's expressions are more vivid than educators are accustomed to, they confirm my own impressions of educational trends from about 1965 through the 1970s. The quotation from Paul Brandwein concerning social studies is particularly apt. No doubt history and civics, or "social studies," in public schools have never been concerned solely with the transmission of unbiassed, scholarly knowlege. How could they? Who can claim to possess that knowledge? Even if someone could claim it, no one could convey it in the highly limited selection of information suited to elementary and secondary classrooms. In fact,these difficult subjects have always reflected a moral purpose, usually the reinforcement of understanding of and loyalty to the

traditions, consensual values, and institutions of the nation.

To admit this is not to say that education in social studies is mere brainwashing and that facts, ideas, and interpretations of history may be twisted to suit the aims of social engineers in alliance with pressure group leaders. Yet this is precisely what has been attempted in the past decade and a half. To convince children of sexual, racial, and ethnic equality history textbooks have been rewritten in order to promote forgotten nonentities to the hall of fame. Paradoxically, efforts were made simultaneously to induce guilt in children by emphasizing past injustices to Indians, Africans, Asians, Jews, Hispanics, Filipinos, and any other groups that could muster a protest movement. Whether these distortions had any lasting effect on youngsters seems doubtful. Propaganda of this type must be intense, repetitious, consistent, and monopolistic to be effective, and the United States is not yet comparable to "Airstrip One" in 1984. It is probable that the principal result of social engineering through the social studies has been to render students more than ever bored by and suspicious of history lessons.

Conceivably the widespread revulsion in society against the radical experiments of the '70s is in part due to the maturing of the generations whom the social engineers strove to manipulate. Schools are not and never have been objects of enthusiastic appreciation on the part of their involuntary clientele. To use them to push certain ideas is self-defeating, since the ideas themselves become inextricably associated with the boredom and frustration that so many young people experience in high school. There are, of course, teachers whose impact remains an inspiring memory with their students, but they are not the teachers who engage in conscious brainwashing. On the contrary, they are individualists, persons of strong character, capable of conveying enthusiasm for the pursuit of knowledge and excellence, who would reject the role of instruments in a social engineering program.

A similar explanation might be given for the widespread popular revulsion against the enforced busing of children in order to provide racial balance in the schools. This judge-directed social engineering was in effect condemned by the United States Senate in 1982. Popular support for such condemnation is probably strengthened as young people who have been the judges' involuntary guinea pigs join the ranks of the voters. When one has spent two hours daily, ten hours weekly, and 320 hours yearly for possibly ten years of one's young life in a gasoline scented bus one is liable to feel resentment against the tyrannical system. Once again the social engineers defeat themselves.

Values Clarification as an Instrument of Social Engineering

Yet another presumably unintended result of social engineering may be noted. The phenomenon summed up in the phrase the "Me Generation" was a typical product of the 1970s. The term encapsulates the Weltanschauung and life style of young people who rejected social reponsibility and conventional moral standards in favor of selfish hedonism, experiments with drugs and sexual promiscuity, and similar sensual egocentricities. It would be misleading to say that the sole cause of this phenomenon was education policy in public schools, but one may suggest that social engineering, and especially that part of social engineering that aimed at destroying conventional moral standards ("values" in the then current jargon), reinforced the anti-social trends of the '70s.

So-called "values clarification" became popular among education pundits in the late 1960s. Its attractions were manifold and its supporters praised the aspects of the program that best suited their own needs or prejudices. For some, values clarification meant that they could teach about moral issues without fear of infringing the Supreme Court's prohibition of religion in public schools. For others it seemed the educational reflection of the moral confusion in society at large. For some it seemed a great liberation -- a breakthrough against the tyranny of custom -- a means of enabling each person (no matter how immature) to choose his/her own value system and appropriate life style. For others still it seemed a way to teach logical reasoning--a modified

version of college courses in ethics or logic. For others it simply meant an easy course, in which neither teacher nor students needed to acquire any substantive knowledge but only to possess the gift of the gab. Finally, for a few, it meant the possibility of sowing the seeds of future revolution by undermining traditional morality and the influence of parents.

One may doubt whether many educators foresaw the "Me Generation"as a possible by-product of values clarification, social engineering, and the permissive, indisciplined education of the 1970s, but there must have been some connection.

Lawrence Kohlberg's Program

Whether these comments on values clarification apply equally or in part to Lawrence Kohlberg's program of moral education is uncertain. Kohlberg's concern with the six (or is it seven?) levels of moral sophistication might be a working hypothesis in a college course in psychology or ethics or theology, but is hardly helpful for sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds. Moreover, if the levels of moral sophistication are real (which is debatable) can attempts to allocate them in individual cases be anything but subjective (not to say patronizing)? And if a person does a good action because he or she is inner-directed, that is, obeying a conscience planted by loving parents, nurtured by stern school teachers, and sanctioned by a demanding and merciful God, are the motive and the morality of the person intrinsically any less admirable than those of a sophisticated professor of ethics who does the same action as the result of intricate reasoning by his liberated conscience concerned for the good of the human race, and this after many years of experimentation and whoring after strange gods? "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." True, but the Churches do not encourage additional sinning in order to provide potential joy in heaven.

My doubts on Kohlberg are those which Burke expressed about the metaphysicians of the French Revolution: Can there be any original discoveries

in morality?

> We know that we have made no discoveries, and we think that no discoveries are to be made, in morality. ...In England we have not yet been completely embowelled of our natural entrails; we still feel within us, and we cherish and cultivate, those inbred sentiments which are the faithful guardians, the active monitors of our duty, the true supporters of all liberal and manly morals...
>
> (Edmund Burke, Reflections on the French Revolution. London: Dent Everyman Press, 1910 & later, p. 83)

An interesting interpretation of Kohlberg is in Alasdair MacIntyre's essay which suggests that the Unites States was founded on two incompatible moral traditions -- one the older, communitarian morality of virtuous, loyal citizens assuming that service to the community was a duty, the other the more recent, individualistic assumption of personal self-satisfaction, laissez faire, and competition for privileges and perquisites, where each person may choose his or her goals in life limited only by laws and adversarial claims of other individuals. As the United States drifted away from the older republican virtues, the moral education program of Kohlberg, according to MacIntyre, became more and more appropriate;

> A presupposition of either Aristotelian or Hegelian moral theory is that the good is only to be learnt in and through membership of a community, a membership from which one derives one's moral identity and one's moral substance. Particular allegiances and loyalties are ineliminable from morality on this view; the universal good is discoverable only in and through the particular. To cut oneself off from the particular is to become what the Greeks called "a stranger," someone homeless and wandering. Thus from an Aristotelian or Hegelian standpoint, the aspiration towards pure universality is the aspiration to become one of a society of strangers. Kohlberg's theory, combining as it does empirical and normative claims, is perhaps best read as a recipe for how to turn children who are still potentially at home in the world into adults who are entirely strangers and homeless. But as a matter of empirical fact -- and we are all in Kohlberg's debt for his having drawn this to our attention -- our culture bred Kohlbergian children for many years before Kohlberg produced his theory.
>
> (Alasdair MacIntyre, "How Moral Education Came to Find its Place in the Schools," in Ethics and Moral Education: A Conference at the National Humanities Center, 1979, page 13)

This is cold comfort: a world of strangers equipped with unprecedented freedom and human rights, and as lonely and unloving as the grey shades in the Greek underworld. However, I am unconvinced by Kohlberg's stages of moral development and by MacIntyre's hypothetical incompatible moral views. I suggest that any society that has developed beyond the closed, tribal stage finds itself compelled to find room for competing loyalties and ambitions. Indeed that is what politics in a relatively free society is largely about. As a commentator on MacIntyre's paper remarked:

> The art of politics is practical wisdom applied in discerning and choosing what is best for the state in its actual circumstances. Moral education falls under the art of politics.
>
> (Jon Moline, "Moral Education in the United States." Ibid., p. 15)

The Objective of the Social Engineers

What sort of utopia or good society the social engineers wanted and perhaps still want is undefined. Society was, presumably, to be privatized, and equalized, and atomized: composed of millions of mobile, unattached egos. It could hardly be strongly democratic, in the sense of a self-governing society, since it would lack the social cohesion that comes from common values and common interests. In fact, a critic might suggest that the society resulting from such social engineering would be a society made to order for bureaucratic-managerial totalitarianism, It would probably not be a cruel, exploitive totalitarianism, unless pockets of virtuous, inner-directed persons, united by heroic dedication to the principles of freedom, remained to fight back.

The connection between the ethical relativism or moral vacuum aimed at by social engineers and the coming of totalitarianism must be clearly recognized. The connection was most noticeable in Germany in the late 1920s and early'30s. It was less obvious in Russia in 1917 because Russia was an underdeveloped and undemocratic empire. Yet it was a Russian who diagnosed the connection in the nineteenth century. Consider Dostoevsky's private comment on his story of the Grand Inquisitor:

> One of the most impassioned contemporary negaters declares himself openly to be on the devil's side, and he affirms that the devil is better for the happiness of people than is Christ. This is a stirring lesson for our foolish but terrifying Russian socialism (terrifying because our youth believes in it): Bread, the tower of Babel, the complete enslavement of the freedom of conscience--that's what the desperate nihilist and atheist ends up with! The difference is that our socialists (and as you well know, they are not only the underground nihilists) are consciously crafty and liars, who do not admit that their ideal is the enslavement of man's conscience and the lowering of humanity to the level of cattle. But my socialist (Ivan Karamazov) is a sincere person, who admits quite openly that he agrees with the views of "The Grand Inquisitor" about mankind and who maintains that Christ's faith has demanded more of man's nature than it can give. This question is posed in the section: "Do you, future saviors of mankind, feel contempt or respect for mankind?"
> And they do and say all this as if in the name of love of humanity: "The law of Christ is hard and abstract, and weak people cannot bear it." And in place of the law of Freedom and Enlightenment, they present man with the law of chains and enslavement by bread....
>
> (Jerry S. Wasserman, ed., Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Grand Inquisitor, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970, p. 28. Letter to N.A. Liubimov, June 11, 1879, reprinted from Edward Wasiolek, ed., The Brothers Karamazov and the Critics, Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1967.)

Moral Education versus Values Clarification and Social Engineering

An important distinction should be made at this point: Values clarification is not moral education. Moral education means: first, training young persons to respect common standards of behavior in their society, that is morality; and second, at a later stage, helping them to develop self-discipline, personal integrity, and independent moral judgment. Moral education is emphatically not an introduction to ethical relativism. Gerald Grant puts the point lucidly:

> In the process of receiving an education we are not merely absorbing facts and learning skills, but we are as well being inducted into some set of standards, beliefs, and values about what it means to be a human being. Schools, even in democratic and pluralist societies, have had the responsibility for teaching what R. S. Peters calls a provisional morality. By provisional, Peters means that teachers initiate children into such beliefs in a nonbehavioristic way, not stamping or "fixing" a particular moral content for life, but teaching in such a way that the children recognize that as adults they will have the responsibility and freedom to reevaluate those beliefs.
>
> (Gerald Grant, Education, Character and American schools. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980, page 146.)

As I wrote in another article:

> Order and discipline in school are essential if young people are to acquire self-discipline. Permissive attitudes in education must be jettisoned if we are to restore academic standards and standards of behavior. To say this is not to reject the ideal of personal independence -- freedom to think and choose for oneself, and to take responsibility for one's actions. The simple truth is that until a person has learned discipline and conformity to social norms, he or she cannot acquire the higher faculty of rational independent judgment.
>
> (Raymond English, "The Revival of Moral Education." American Education, Jan.-Feb. 1982, page 10.)

Moral education is generally achieved by direct experience of life and by following the example set by persons one admires or respects.

It should be further noted that moral education will be frustrated if it is attempted through an analytical, ratiocinative process. There are certain basic assumptions that cannot be proved. In Dr. Johnson's somewhat ponderous words:

> It is difficult to prove the principles of practice, because they have for the most part not been discovered by investigation,

> but obtruded by experience, and the demonstrator will find, after an operose deduction, that he has been trying to make that seen which can only be felt.
>
> (Samuel Johnson, Taxation No Tyranny, 1775. Second paragraph of the pamphlet.)

This conception of the unarguable basic principles of morality was frequently reiterated in Johnson's conversation. For instance, when Boswell mentioned a person who maintained that there was no distinction between virtue and vice (? an early exponent of values clarification), Johnson remarked:

> . . . if he really does think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, Sir, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons.
>
> (Boswell's Life of Johnson, edited by George Birkbeck Hill. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887, Vol. I., page 432.)

One is reminded of Henry Fielding's comment on philosophers who reject the possibility of virtue:

> The truth-finder, having raked out that jakes, his own mind, and being there capable of tracing no ray of divinity, nor anything virtuous or good, or lovely, or loving, very fairly, honestly, and logically concludes that no such things exist in the whole creation.
>
> (The History of Tom Jones. New York: Random House, 1964, page 177.)

Since values clarification involved long discussions of choices and dilemmas involving ethical values it was necessarily incompatible with moral education. Values clarification aimed at undermining the spontaneous awareness of right and wrong that family and community impress on the child's mind.

Values clarification is halfway toward a college course in Ethics, that is, the science of morals. Such courses at college level are valuable. The classification of ethical systems, like the classification of political systems, is essential to a scholarly understanding of human societies and human purposes. But a course in comparative political systems will not necessarily make a student into a better citizen, nor will a course in Ethics automatically make him or her a more moral person. Indeed, the probability lies in the opposite direction, since critical analysis may and often does upset one's operative standards of judgment and behavior without substituting a coherent, workable, and firmly held set of values. Higher education is dangerous to peace of mind.

A college Ethics course would be too difficult for most high school students, and would probably be inadvisable even for bright students, since high intelligence in the young does not imply mature judgment and understanding of the human predicament, acquirements that come from experience. A course in values clarification, while less demanding than a course with readings from Aristotle, Confucius, Epictetus, Aquinas, Hobbes, and so on, may be equally or more disturbing (if learning actually occurs). Surely, there are adequate opportunities in literature and history courses, and on other occasions, to discuss moral dilemmas with students, without setting up imaginary case studies and devoting a whole course to inexperienced speculation.

The Popular Demand for Moral Education

These distinctions are important because moral education is very much on people's minds in the early 1980s. A Gallup Poll of May 1981

asked whether the high schools were paying enough attention to "developing students' moral and ethical character." Of the sample public 62 percent responded that the schools were not devoting enough attention to this matter. In the same poll the "biggest problem" of the public schools was identified as "lack of discipline" by 23 percent of the public (other "biggest problems" were "use of drugs" - 15 percent; "poor curriculum/ poor standards" - 14 percent; "lack of proper financial support" - 12 percent; "difficulty in getting good teachers" - 11 percent; "integration/busing (combined)" - 11 percent.) Moral education and problems of school discipline rank high in public concern.

Similarly results were given in the Gallup Polls about public schools in 1975 and 1980.

> Would you favor or oppose instruction in the schools that would deal with morals and moral behavior?

	National Totals (percent) 1980	National Totals (percent) 1975
Favor	79	79
Oppose	16	15
Don't Know	5	6

(The figures on Gallup Polls are from Public Opinion, Oct.-Nov. 1981, page 25, for 1981; and from Phi Delta Kappan, Sept. 1980, page 39 for 1975 and 1980.)

Conceivably, the vague wording of the question permitted educators to assume that values clarification supplied this demand. For reasons already given, this assumption was certainly erroneous, save in the case of the occasional teacher who guided the class firmly.

The popular demand for moral education and character building is probably the expression of revulsion against the ethical relativism, permissiveness, indiscipline, and egocentric hedonism that influenced public schools during the period c. 1965-80. In some cases the revulsion went so far as to produce contempt or despair over the schools. Howard Means wrote:

> Public education in America in 1981 stands for nothing, or rather for the confused mishmash of social directives that American society as a whole has foisted off on it. The inescapable, the root problem of public education is that it has been forced to be the main tool of social policy in this country -- this despite the fact that it was never designed for the purpose, this despite the fact that the formulation of social policy has, at its core, nothing to do with learning. Talk, for example, about returning to tracking, about again grouping students by ability levels, and you will be met not with the language of learning but with that of social policy: segregation, inequality of opportunity, inequality of results. Indeed, perhaps the final measure of just what a swamp-hole the philosophy of public education in this country has become is that it can only defend itself by accusing its opponents of racism, of elitism.
>
> (Howard Means, "Let us Now Bury the Public Schools," The Washingtonian, May 1981, pages 97-98.)

Adjusting to the Demand for Moral Education

The demand for moral education (and for improved general education and improved discipline) is one consequence of the swing of public opinion. Somewhere between 1976 and 1980 the dominant tide of liberal-radical opinion ebbed and a more traditional tide began to flow. (For those interested in the dialectical swing of popular moods in the United States I recommend Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr.'s essay "The Tides of American Politics", in his book Paths to the Present.)

This pendulum swing of the public mood will be demonstrated by actual political and cultural developments in the 1980s. In free countries popular feeling does not follow a straightforward, cumulative course. Rather, a given trend follows a certain course -- leftward or rightward, permissive or puritanical -- and, if allowed to develop, reaches a culminating point at which its successes begin to appear absurd and self-contradictory; then a dialectical counter-trend sets in.

The counter-trend is not usually -- perhaps not ever -- a reaction back to the precise values of 20 years before. For example, recent opinion surveys suggest that many of the self-centered values of the '60s and '70s are accepted by the majority of Americans. However, there is present also a revulsion against the extreme expressions of selfish hedonism, coupled with a recognition that the economic and international predicament of our society sets limits on the expectations and "entitlements" that Americans may entertain. Barring a serious crisis affecting our society as a whole it is unlikely that we shall see a resurgence of intense national unity and determined will.

All the same, as the counter-trend sets in, there is a danger of overreaction, and the signs of such overreaction are perceptible at the present time in education and in morality. In view of this danger, it behooves the educational establishment to adjust in a spirit of moderation to the new demands for discipline and standards both academic and ethical. Just as many conservatively inclined educators had to go with the tides of radicalism in recent years, while maintaining to the best of their ability and without fanfare some principles that might otherwise have been swept

away, so at the present time the radical activists must be prepared to compromise.

Many enthusiasts for the experiments of the '60s and '70s are ready to jump off the bandwagon at this point, either because they realize that the big battles have been carried as far toward victory as they are likely to go, or because they already perceive counterproductive consequences. There have, after all, been great advances in sexual equality, racial integration, recognition of cultural pluralism, student rights, equality of opportunity, and the relaxation of rigid moral codes. However, these advances have been purchased at a painful price: deterioration of discipline, decline in educational achievement, threats to the safety of teacher and students, juvenile crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and multiplication of teenage pregnancies, for example. The teacher's lot in a radically innovative educational environment is not a happy one. It is all very well to grow a beard or abandon one's brassiere to prove one's independence, but these gestures -- if carried to extremes -- can become embarrassing. Ethical relativism reaches a self-defeating point when no one can leave any personal property in the classroom without its being stolen or when the students refuse to do any home work.

Happily, the more extreme consequences of the great social engineering experiments have been and are being quietly corrected. Radical stridency has subsided, and reactionary stridency may -- if educators are wise -- be forestalled. Moderate, traditional views on education that would have been violently condemned by the self-appointed censors of education only five or six years ago are now widely published. See, for example, many of the articles in Daedalus, Summer and Fall of 1981, recent articles

by Bennett and Delattre in The Public Interest and The American Educator, Coleman's and Greeley's studies of public and private schools in 1981, Paul Copperman's The Literacy Hoax, Postman's Teaching as a Conserving Activity, Chester Finn's "Call for Quality Education" in American Education, January-February 1982, and Frances FitzGerald's America Revised. I think I detect subtle changes of emphasis in the National Council for the Social Studies and even in the National Education Association, but I cannot be sure. Certainly the ASCD's Educational Leadership and the Phi Delta Kappan give much attention to constructive, traditional educational concerns.

The Substance of Moral Education

Teachers often ask for guidance about moral education. They are understandably nervous after the iconoclastic '60s and '70s. Let me summarize a few suggestions.

1. Morality is learned from examples not from sermons. Examples are set by the persons whom one admires, by persons one loves or likes, and by characters in books, plays, movies, sports.
2. Moral Education is not a subject for a special course: it should permeate the entire curriculum and the atmosphere of the school.
3. Moral Education should be realistic and imbued with a sense of humor. It should recognize conflicts of values, and cases where the actor is faced with a choice of evils.
4. Moral Education should aim at molding character and spontaneous right action rather than setting up categories of values and engaging in logic chopping.

5. Moral Education should not dwell on highly controversial topics in the classroom: Sexual promiscuity, abortion, homosexuality, pornography, and suchlike topics have no more place in a public school curriculum than theology.

6. Among controversial values to be avoided, or at least handled with caution and reluctance, are many of the values recently introduced for social engineering purposes, for example: ethical relativism, doctrines of absolute sexual equality (unisexism), extreme cultural pluralism and relativism (polygamy is as good as monogamy; cannibalism is all right if that is how you were brought up), and nonreligious attempts to teach about death and dying.

7. Teachers should not be afraid of the bogey of "middle class values" set up by the values clarifiers. Middle class values include pride in one's work, personal integrity and independence, personal responsibility, law abidance, duty to one's family and to one's dependents, and similar qualities that are essential in any developed society. They are certainly essential in school.

8. Finally, moral education should avoid any public intrusion into the private lives of students and their families. (Invasion of privacy was among the objectionable aspects of values clarification programs.)

In the preceding list no attempt has been made to enumerate the moral principles that should be "taught". The morality, or the moral

consensus, that sustains a relatively free community is a subtle, spontaneous web of rights, obligations and expectations; to analyze it will do more harm than good. Furthermore, actual decisions and behavior involving moral choices are seldom neatly deducible from a single principle; rather, they depend on the balancing of principles that may point toward mutually contradictory actions, on the setting of the principles in the specific personal or social context, and on the intelligent use of the individual's uncoerced judgment. This is not "situation ethics"; it is, in the original sense of the term, casuistry, that is, the application of correct principles in a given case.

The Problem of Community

Although it is clear that the public generally want the public schools to do a better and more traditional job of moral education, certain doubts as to the efficacy of moral education in our time persist. We know that the schools cannot do much to modify the ideas, standards, and behavior learned in the family and in the community, and it is widely recognized (1) that many families fail to provide adequate moral guidance and control for their younger members and (2) that many American communities are divided by cultural, economic, ethnic, religious, and moral differences. Some people have a painful hunch that our society contains many classic symptoms of social decadence; they agree with Gibbon: "how much swifter is the progress of corruption than its cure." (Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, in three volumes. New York: Heritage Press, 1946, Vol. I, page 245.)

Consider the problem of community in our America. Some observers are convinced that cultural-ethical pluralism has gone so far in many

cities and suburbs that no consensus on standards of behavior remains. If it were not so, they say, we should not be faced with intra-school district conflicts over textbooks, evolution, library books, sex education, bilingual education, busing for integration, sexual composition of sports teams, standardized tests, minimum competency, "mainstreaming" the retarded homogeneous grouping of students, and so on. In 1980-81, for example, out of 1,000 community conflicts over removing books from libraries, between 600 and 700 involved school libraries. One such conflict, arising in Long Island, New York, is to be decided by the Supreme Court in 1982.

Among those who perceive irreversible cultural fissiparity there are two major and opposite responses. One school (which dominated in the 70s) would simply ignore the local community's educational demands. Their remedy is to establish very large consolidated school districts, with power in the hands of educational administrators and leaders of teachers' unions, with permissiveness and great curricular flexibility in schools, and with mandatory special programs imposed by a federal department of education to satisfy special interest groups. These ideas were at the root of much social engineering in our schools.

The other school of thought among those who consider that American pluralism has destroyed American communities opts for the abandonment of our present public school system and its replacement by both public and private schools that will offer a wide variety of choice to families, each of which will be provided with vouchers and possibly tuition tax credits entitling each child to education in the school of his or her choice. In this way community control of education will be restored,

by the creation of voluntary educational communities composed of parents, students, teachers, and administrators who share the same moral principles and educational goals. If the assumption is correct that the process of cultural and moral division in our society is irreversible, then this proposal would permanently institutionalize that division.

However, if the assumption is correct it is impossible for democratic self-government on a national scale to survive. A second civil war is unlikely, but creeping totalitarian dictatorship is not. In any case the assumption that the divisions in our society will steadily deepen is almost certainly a false reading of recent trends. In many large school districts it is true that a multiple polarization has occurred on ethnic, racial, religious, and economic axes, but, apart from a limited number of militant (sometimes professional) activists, there seems to be general acceptance in such communities of the values that contribute to the well being of the children: values such as discipline, safety, decency, respect for persons and property, efficient learning, kindliness, loyalty to institutions such as the school and the family, and truthfulness. There are no doubt clashes of opinion between avant garde parents and teachers and conservative ones, or between the parents of bright and the parents of dull students. Occasionally the clash may be along economic lines in communities with wide disparities of income. Internal conflicts of these kinds, however, have characterized public school communities for many generations. They are occasionally exacerbated today by the alignment of ethnic or religious groups with one side or the other in educational controversies.

In those school districts where cultural pluralism has been exploited for social engineering purposes, I suggest that the phenomenon has been exaggerated and that it is diminishing. If the schools will stick to broad community values such as were mentioned above, avoiding the innovative values introduced in recent years, there is no reason why moral education should not succeed. Furthermore, if vouchers and tuition tax credits are introduced there is little reason to fear that the public schools will be destroyed; on the contrary, since the public schools will be compelled by competition to pay more attention to the community, they will be improved and strengthened.

A similar response can be made to the gloomy prognosis about the American family and its influence on the moral standards of children. There are indeed millions of families that fail to take responsibility for their children. But then, I know no civilized society that has not had a proportion of such families: read any old novel or sociological study about life in slums; read Huck Finn's account of his father; read Alfred Doolittle's paternal philosophy in Pygmalion. Public schools cannot correct these malignancies of society, but they can take as their norm for moral standards and behavior the youngsters from the decent families, and in so doing offer a chance of moral redemption to the neglected and misguided ones.

In most communities in the United States, as in the majority of families, there is a basic, common denominator of moral behavior, of decent, socially acceptable character, and of conduct in games, competition, and political participation. Moral education is largely concerned with this common, normative content. That this is not the stuff that makes

heroes, martyrs, saints, preachers, poets, rebels, or passive resisters I am the first to recognize. But in the first place, schools cannot produce these types to order, and in the second place it is not the schools' business to try. Nor, I presume, should schools try to produce oddballs, crooks, shysters, pimps, or assassins; although all these add to the spicy variety of life.

To sum up: there is a widespread public demand for normative moral education in public schools, and if educators resist that demand they risk bringing on a more extreme reaction. The revulsion against ethical relativism and social engineering in the schools is also a movement toward school decentralization, that is, toward more intimate relations between communities and families on the one hand and the schools and teachers on the other. We may expect that the demand for a wider choice of schools for families will continue, and will result in experiments with tuition tax credits and/or educational vouchers. All these trends are connected with the desire for a wholesome, consensual morality that will link the schools, families, and the community.

Addendum to "Social Studies versus Social Engineering."

In my conclusion I failed to re-emphasize what was implicit, and occasionally explicit, in the earlier pages. I refer to the objectionable and immoral treatment of children as objects ot be manipulated under policies of social engineering, values clarification, and hedonistic relativism. If successful these educational procedures would convert human beings into mere animals—creatures led by short-sighted sensual impulses, measuring their satisfaction by material gratification and sensual thrills.

This insight into the errors of materialism and sensualism was expounded by Dostoevsky in the letter about "The Grand Inquisitor". I am reminded of it as I reread another Russian comment: Solzhenitsyn's Commencement Address at Harvard, 1978. Speaking of the excessive reaction in Renaissance Europe against medieval religiosity, Solzhenitsyn exposed the underlying philosophical error of recent radical trends in the West--including the trends in education:

> The humanistic way of thinking, which has proclaimed itself our guide, did not admit the existence of intrinsic evil in man, nor did it see any task higher than the attainment of happiness on earth. It started modern western civilization on the dangerous trend of worshipping man and his material needs....Thus gaps were left open for evil, and its drafts blow freely today. Mere freedom per se does not in the least solve all the problems of human life and even adds a number of new ones.
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> (Solzhenitsyn at Harvard, Ed. Ronald Berman. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980, pp. 16-17.)

The liberal-utopian illusion that human beings are naturally good, and that evil somehow comes from "society" or "social conditions", was at the root of the experiments in social engineering and liberation

from traditional authority and traditional morality in education. The illusion was an illusion, and recent attempts to use it as a guideline for social policy have once again produced results far removed from utopia. The lessons of millennial aspirations, antinomian communities, eleutheromaniac visions such as those of Robespierre and St. Just, or extreme pacifism, apparently have to be relearned in the hardest way by successive generations in highly civilized societies. Albert Camus had documented this point meticulously i The Rebel long before the fashion of values clarification became all the rage.

Remember: the inevitable consequence of individual freedom carried to extremes is anarchy and anomie—social dislocation and personal disorientation. The remedy for this condition is, almost as inevitably, coercive imposition of conformity to some norms or other—indeed, to any norms. In the twentieth century the short name for coerced conformity is totalitarianism.